

Dopethrone, Huata, Buddha Sentenza (Heidelberg, Halle 02, 2013-05-31)

Basic aspects of the concert:

3 bands, three times some slight changes in the equipment

Number of attendances: hard to say ... varied according to the bands. Not sold-out.

Length of the concert: ~four and a half hours

Track list: not provided by the bands.

Price of the ticket: 12/14€

It seems track lists are for sissies. No one seems to use them any more. Similar to the concert of Sóley also this time I was not granted one for the course of writing a review. Also the line-up and stuff is unknown to me ... who needs press kits these days anyway? I was surprised to find one (!) sheet which contained some vague references to the times when the bands were supposed to start their gig. Better than nothing I guess.

There are two things that strike you at this venue: the proximity between the bands and the audience – especially apparent through the small height of the stage. Another aspect of the Halle 02 is the fact that the illumination of the stage is anything but optimal; at least on this very evening. In order to get some good snapshots this trifle proved to be an extremely hindrance, especially when tools like a powerful flash are (should be) avoided in order to get the proper shutter times. It should be kept in mind that the musicians do not stand on stage like statues, which made matters not particularly easier for me. And while I am at it, I fail to see the advantage of a fog machine at that particular spot of the room.

Enough with the ramblings.

Buddha Sentenza (Heidelberg/Germany, Doom metal with psychedelic and progressive elements)

The opening act of the evening was Buddha Sentenza, a band whose music had been labelled as “South-Western-Lower-Valley-Rock”. What about Upper-Valley Rock” or “Lower-Hill-Rock” or ...well, congratulation for trying hard, but you are not Rhapsody or do you need to compensate for something?

Anyway, this five member band does/did not have a vocalist and therefore stuck to instrumental stuff. Two guitar players, one bass, one keyboard and a drummer appeared on stage, but one guitar player would switch to a violin later on. The performance was actually quite good and offered lot of variation of tempi and styles. Psychedelic, progressive and doom elements were some facets of their concept and it was nice to experience how this actually played out. The sound mix had not been the best, which lead to the effect that of the keys not much were to be heard. And even despite this aspect the band delivered a surprisingly dense and interesting performance. The one hour (!) show was of a good quality and made clear that some thoughts went into the material, which was loaded with nice ideas, twists and turns.

Buddha Sentenza is definitely recommended and had been a positive surprise on that evening. Their music has a certain amount of freshness and versatility, which is quite enjoyable.

<http://www.buddhasentenza.de/>

You can either buy it or download the tracks of their new album for free.

Huata (France, Stoner / Doom Metal)

When the band started I was trying to return an empty bottle of beer – 3,30€ for 0,33l (!) – and missed the first two minutes or so. Actually, my main motivation to go to this concert had been this band, because the images of them and their entry at the Metal Archives suggested them to be rather interesting and as definitely something out of the ordinary routine. Sadly, only the vocalist was dressed in a cowl, while the other ones “appeared” in an ordinary fashion. Yes, they have a vocalist and he is the focal point of this band. And this comes with the obvious effects. Too many lyrics ... and without a proper compensation of this aspect by the instruments. Therefore, while the vocalist is undoubtedly able to draw some attention to his person, what is missing are the contrasts, something to counter this aspect. It is the balance that is not there.

Nevertheless, the sheer sight of the vocalist, to see him leave the stage and sing amongst the crowd (!) had been quite impressive. It is up to him to create a core aspect of the atmosphere but without getting too active or energetic, while the rest of the band has to deal with this part. Ritualistic and with a certain imperative, this is what the band delivers. Beside all this they were really able to get the crowd going and to deliver a well acclaimed performance.

On a side note:

The drink of Ronan, the barefooted vocalist of Huata, had been Melmor Chouchen, which is some form of mead.

Dopethrone (Canada, Doom / Sludge / Stoner Metal)

And the award for most maniacal facial expression of the evening goes to Vincent Houde, sole guitarist and vocalist of Dopethrone, the headliner of the evening. Even though he gave the impression of some deranged guy with a certain type of brain fever, his actual vocal performance left a bit to desire. Again, the balancing issues have had major effect in this regard – the bass had been too loud throughout the entire concert and proper balancing had never been something to look out for –, but it can actually be doubted whether a different set up would have provided the audience with something other than they had the chance to experience. Somehow it felt this band attempted to push it a bit too hard. Their music came over as too limited in terms of their musical approach. On stage and with a sound as they had been granted with, all became an indistinguishable noisy mess. Yes, it had been possible to feel the drums and the bass guitar ... but that is it. Vincent Houde could have sung about the latest satanic cookie recipes or maybe even about some weird stoner MLP fantasy and it would not have made a penny of a difference. His voice had been buried under the dense layers of the instruments, lost somewhere and hardly ever seen again. They tried hard to sound evil and come over as such, but in the end they failed to offer a conclusive performance. Aggressive they had undoubtedly been, but similar to a toothless tiger, they fail to set the final strike. Maybe their studio sound is different, but considering the similarities in their compositions it can be doubted that even these have a lasting impact.

Conclusion:

What started as a five member performance with a lot of artistic wit and sophistication, moved more and more into a realm of obscurity, noise and minimalism. Fewer and fewer gadget appeared on stage, less and less musicians tormented their instruments and with Dopethrone is reached the point of DIY (un)conventionality. The attendees experienced a wide variety of concept and styles on that evening/night. Naturally it had been the last band to draw the most attention as well as the most motivation from the crowd, despite a rather muddy and strange kind of sound.

12/14€ for an evening like that has been money well spend. Not convincing on all levels but definitely quite enjoyable.